

### **Trinity 3 [Proper 7 (B)]**

A sermon preached by the Rector, the Very Reverend Tim Barker, at the parish church of St Andrew Guernsey on Sunday 20 June 2021

*Readings: 2 Corinthians 6 vv 1-13 and Mark 4 vv 35-41*

St Paul offers a salutary warning of the difficulties of faith, even in the early days of the Church, as he writes to the Corinthians. Whilst most Christians in this country will not have experienced beatings and imprisonments, yet this is a daily reality for too many of our brother and sister Christians in other parts of the world.

Paul reflects on his many misfortunes, not so much to blow his own trumpet, as to demonstrate his credentials and authority as an apostle. He can be confident that he can see the results of his trials in the communities of faith whom he had introduced to Jesus. And he is quietly confident, because he knows it through faith, that in the end God is in control.

Paul reminds all who exercise ministry that we cannot and must not be in ministry for our own ends. Popularity is a dangerous game: part of the calling of those who are leaders is that we must speak the truth in love, even if that is uncomfortable. And for us all, to demonstrate resilience, integrity and, if and when we have found it, by the grace of God, deep inner peace in the storms of life: that will have a deep attraction to people who are open to exploring the Christian faith. It can be a deeply powerful witness.

Our Gospel reading gives yet another perspective.

Just as God moves over the face of the waters of chaos in the Creation stories in Genesis, so Jesus brings order in the chaos of nature and in the chaos of human lives. The power of God is demonstrably at work. The boat in Mark's Gospel has often been thought of as Christ's Church: battered and fearful in turbulent times, but always secure when it trusts in Jesus. Even though the disciples were on familiar waters, practicing their trade as fishermen, they were panicking in the storm until they were surrounded by the calm which Jesus brought. I know that the times when my ministry has seemed to be most stressful and fruitless are the times when I have floundered in the storm of life, when I have tried to rely on myself and my own strengths, rather than listening to God and those around me through whom God speaks. Perhaps you can recognise this in your own journey of faith.

'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?' The disciples saw that the power of God is demonstrably at work in Jesus – this culminates in Jesus' crucifixion when God's power transforms the world for ever and our relationship with God moves on to a new level.

It is true for every church that ministry and mission will only really flourish when there is collaborative working that is constantly aware of the grace and power of God working in and through what we do together. Our constant prayer must be for God's guidance, and that, as a church community in this parish, we are ready for the implications of whatever God's call may be. In other words, that we will accept the Lordship of Christ over our church and seek to discern what that may mean in practice. Even if it's not what we expect.

We may not be persecuted. We may not be in a raging storm at sea. But today's readings make it so very clear that without faith, without deep confidence in God, we can do

nothing. And it is in the storms and the crises that we find and recognise God most truly and profoundly.

Paul knew the experience, as eventually did the disciples, of having the inner resources to face whatever life threw at him. It is slow, deliberate and often unexciting work, as we build our Christian character and our trust in God. It is literally the work of a lifetime. It enables us to trust in God when waves rock the boat.